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Broadcast Managers and the Tolerance for Sexual Harassment Inventory

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The purpose of this study was to explore attitudes toward sexual harassment by broadcast general managers and news directors. This study asked broadcast general managers and news directors to respond to the Tolerance for Sexual Harassment Inventory (TSHI; Lott, Reilly, & Howard, 1982) to determine if there were any differences between the two occupation groups. The index score was used as a dependent variable in a multiple regression equation. Four of nine independent variables (view of women's role in society, role of government, physical appearance, and government support) were retained in a stepwise regression procedure. That accounted for 24 percent of the variance in the model. The TSHI statements did not distinguish between broadcast general managers and news directors.

The early 1970s brought a major change to broadcast newsrooms. Faced with new employment reporting requirements from the Federal Communications Commission (Head & Sterling, 1990), large numbers of women entered the workplace as news reporters and anchors (Buchman, 1985).

By the early 1990s, a shrinking job market made it more difficult for men and women to enter the field. Older women, many of whom had entered the field during the 1970s, faced the problem of keeping their jobs. As the budget ax fell at many stations, "older women" were "in more danger of being cut back than older men" (Standish, 1992, p. 17). By 1992, women and men were likely to leave broadcast journalism by their mid-40s (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1992).

Sexual Harassment

The purpose of our study was to extend the exploration of attitudes toward sexual harassment to include both broadcast general managers and news directors working at commercial radio and television stations in the United States. Previous research, and the present study, have shown radio and television general managers and news directors to be

overwhelmingly male (Lipschultz & Hilt, 1992). The media has power to influence public opinion. Their views about harassment may help explain broader attitudes on gender issues.

Lott (1992) claims sexual harassment behavior is related to the more subtle forms of gender discrimination: "It is typically taken for granted that the various hostile or discriminating behaviors directed against women are related, although these relationships have not yet been fully established empirically" (p. 11). Lott's paradigm posits that sexual harassment is "part of a larger and more general dimension of misogyny, or hostility toward women" (p. 10). Lott's model would treat employment discrimination on the basis of sex in hiring and firing decisions as examples of "institutional exclusion" that can be related to harassment attitudes.

Lott, Reilly, and Howard (1982) used the Tolerance for Sexual Harassment Inventory (TSHI) to show attitude differences between men and women. The ten-item index asks for responses to statements dealing with sexually-harassing behavior (Lott et al., 1982; Reilly, Lott, & Gallogly, 1986).

Lott et al. (1982) found that men were less likely to have personally experienced sexual harassment or known others who have, and that this limited their understanding of it. In a sample of university students, men were more tolerant of sexual harassment than women (Reilly et al., 1986). Early work that employed the Sexual Harassment Inventory had been limited to studying university students. Despite the fact that the statements associate behaviors at school with those in the workplace, there had been no attempt to relate attitudes in various occupational settings to the index.

Broadcast Management Research

Women's issues have rarely been the topic of research in broadcast managers and their employees. One survey dealt with discrimination and asked women television news anchors about the problem (Ferri & Keller, 1986). Sixty-eight respondents identified physical appearance as the greatest career barrier for women. Respondents also identified sex-based differences in hiring practices and problems overcoming stereotypical attitudes about women's societal roles as career barriers. In a more recent telephone survey, Duhé and Stone (1992) used the membership list of the Radio-Television News Directors Association (RTNDA) to randomly select male television news directors, and to attempt to question all female television news directors. An overwhelming 96 percent answered questions about sexual harassment following the Hill-Thomas media coverage. The news directors reported

an enhanced newsroom awareness of the sexual harassment issue, and most said their newsrooms already had policies in place. "Almost no differences were found between male and female news directors except where news directors themselves had been harassed" (p. 10). A majority of male and female news directors considered sexual harassment "at least a minor problem" in their newsrooms (p. 10).

The Duhé and Stone (1992) study was limited to television news directors. No study has compared news director responses to those of their immediate supervisor—the station general manager. It is the general manager at radio and television stations who ultimately is responsible for all management decisions, particularly those affecting employee behaviors (Jacobs, 1990).

While little quantitative research has been conducted on sexual harassment at stations, broadcast industry publications have highlighted concerns of management-level employees (Siemer, 1993). Faced with a growing threat of litigation against stations, RTNDA President David Bartlett suggests that news people will not be able to trust each other in private conversations:

We can't allow 'semantic terrorism' to interfere with the freedom of conversation among individuals in the workplace or elsewhere. If co-workers can't feel safe in private conversations, we'll lose that rapport among staffers (p. 64).

Bartlett adds that this might destroy the spirit of camaraderie in newsrooms:

I'd hate to see the usually rowdy, boisterous nature of a newsroom be chilled by a wave of political correctness. If we've reached a point where telling a dirty joke is sexual harassment, we've lost an important part of the camaraderie which makes a newsroom work (p. 64).

The present study asked the following questions of broadcast general managers and news directors about sexual harassment in newsrooms:

1. How do general managers and news directors respond to the Tolerance for Sexual Harassment Inventory? Are there any differences in response between the two occupational groups?
2. What variables might predict a high tolerance for sexual harassment by broadcast managers?

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

General managers and news directors at commercial radio and television stations across the United States were selected as a stratified

random sample (Babbie, 1989) using the 1992 *Broadcasting & Cable Market Place*. In the first stage, the 209 television markets and 262 radio markets were each divided into four groups based on size. Then, 26 markets were randomly selected within each of these subgroups. In the second stage, individual radio and television general managers were randomly selected to represent each of the markets. The sample represented roughly equal numbers of general managers and news directors for comparative purposes.

A total of 416 management-level employees were identified for the survey mailing list.

Procedure

The Total Design Method for mail surveys was used (Dillman, 1979). Personalized cover-letters, survey booklets and business reply envelopes were sent. The first wave of surveys was mailed in October 1992. This was followed by a second mailing of the survey to non-respondents in early November. A third wave of surveys was mailed to non-respondents in early December.

The overall response rate was 36.3 percent ($N = 151$). The 1992 response rate was typical for such surveys (Wimmer & Dominick, 1991). The main advantage of the mail survey, in this case, is the anonymity provided to respondents "so that subjects are more likely to answer sensitive questions candidly" (p. 122).

Instruments/Measures

Respondents completed a self-administered seven-page survey booklet. The questionnaire dealt with a broad range of issues including: demographics, career choices, broadcast education, broadcast regulation, public opinion and the TSHI. The TSHI statements were adapted to fit the workplace setting by deleting school references:

- Most women who are sexually insulted by a man provoke his behavior by the way they talk, act, or dress.
- An attractive woman has to expect sexual advances and should learn how to handle them.
- Most men are sexually teased by many of the women with whom they interact on the job.
- A man must learn to understand that a woman's "no" to his sexual advances really means "no." (reverse scored)
- It is only natural for a woman to use her sexuality as a way of getting ahead at work.
- An attractive man has to expect sexual advances and should learn how to handle them.

- I believe that sexual intimidation is a serious social problem. (reverse scored)
- It is only natural for a man to make sexual advances to a woman he finds attractive.
- Innocent flirtations make the workday interesting.
- Encouraging a supervisor's sexual interest is frequently used by women to improve their work situation.

A five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree) was employed.

The lower the total score, the more intolerant the respondent was toward sexual harassment. The index yielded acceptable levels of internal consistency (Chronbach's $\alpha = .83$) for the measure (Wimmer & Dominick, 1991).

RESULTS

The sample demographics, in general, conformed to responses in previous surveys of the nation's general managers and news directors (Lipschultz & Hilt, 1992).

The median age of respondents was 41. Ninety-four percent of them were white, and 83.4 percent were men. Within the two occupation groups, only 7.2 percent of the general managers and 24.4 percent of the news directors were women.

Tolerance for Sexual Harassment Inventory

Broadcast general managers and news directors responded to the ten Tolerance for Sexual Harassment Inventory (TSHI) statements. All ten statements were intercorrelated at statistically significant levels. Additionally, we report the Pearson correlation coefficients for the nine independent variables and the dependent variable TSHI score.

In general, the broadcast managers in this sample disagreed with the eight statements that were tolerant of sexual harassment, and they agreed with the two statements that were intolerant of sexual harassment.

There were no statistically significant differences between broadcast general managers and news directors.

Analysis

At the first stage of the analysis, the criteria for considering independent variables was a statistically significant Pearson correlation coefficient ($p < .05$) with the TSHI score. Nine variables qualified to be considered as independent variables in the regression model. They were:

TABLE 1 Demographic Description of Broadcast General Managers and News Directors

<i>Variables</i>	<i>General Managers (N = 69)</i>	<i>News Directors (N = 82)</i>	<i>Total (N = 151)</i>
Median Average Age	45	37	41
College Major			
Percent Communication*	40.0%	77.3%	60.4%
Percent Business	26.2	7.6	16.0
Percent Liberal Arts**	33.8	15.1	23.6
Race			
Percent White	91.2%	96.3%	94.0%
Percent Other	8.8	3.7	6.0
Gender			
Percent Male	92.8%	75.6%	83.4%
Percent Female	7.2	24.4	16.6
Marital Status			
Percent Never Married	0.0%	23.2%	12.6%
Percent Married	87.0	61.0	72.8
Percent Divorced/Widowed	13.0	15.8	14.6
Median Number of Children	2	1	2
Median Individual Income	85,000	30,000	47,000
Political Party Identification			
Democrat	17.6%	23.8%	20.9%
Republican	42.6	25.0	33.1
Independent or Other	39.8	51.2	46.0
Individual's Political Stand			
Conservative	62.3%	33.8%	47.0%
Middle-of-the-Road	23.2	35.0	29.5
Liberal	14.5	31.2	23.5
Most Frequent Parental Occupation			
Percent of fathers who were Managers/Professionals	33.8%	34.2%	34.0%
Percent of Mothers who were Homemakers	65.7	51.9	58.2

*Communication includes Mass Communication, Journalism, Speech, and Broadcasting.

**Liberal Arts does not include Communication or Business majors.

TABLE 2 Correlation Coefficients for Independent and Dependent Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1	1.00	.31**	.32**	.27**	.37**	.33**	.35**	.33**	.18*	.43**	.60**	-.09	.15	.22**	.32**	.17*	.07	.29**	.30**	-.26**
2		1.00	.51**	.11	.29**	.72**	.10	.32**	.29**	.41**	.69**	-.07	.16	.08	.02	.16	.07	.30**	.18*	-.15
3			1.00	.05	.44**	.52**	.17*	.33**	.36**	.49**	.67**	-.06	.17*	.06	.14	.24**	.29*	.28**	.30**	-.08
4				1.00	.07	.23**	.30**	.14	.15	.22**	.37**	-.04	-.05	.03	.01	-.11	.07	.17*	.00	-.03
5					1.00	.41**	.30**	.46**	.46**	.56**	.71**	-.21*	.04	.21*	.29**	.20*	.28**	.38**	.20*	-.11
6						1.00	.08	.40**	.27**	.53**	.73**	-.06	.17	.15	.08	.27**	.04	.33**	.30**	-.19*
7							1.00	.28**	.25**	.39**	.66**	-.17*	.11	.16	.08	.03	-.01	.23**	.16	-.09
8								1.00	.44**	.39**	.66**	-.17*	.21*	.06	.12	.09	.19*	.20*	.03	-.11
9									1.00	.37**	.60**	-.15	.14	-.06	.09	.13	.12	.14	.02	.03
10										1.00	.74**	-.20*	.13	.15	.20*	.27**	.17*	.26**	.22**	-.11
11											1.00	-.18*	.20*	.17*	.20*	.24**	.20*	.41**	.27**	-.17*
12												1.00	.21*	.04	.03	-.04	-.20*	-.16	-.10	.10
13													1.00	.05	-.03	.04	.02	.06	.09	-.14
14														1.00	.11	.05	-.03	.33**	.45**	-.11
15															1.00	.29**	.29**	.15	.16	-.14
16																1.00	.24**	.10	.07	-.15
17																	1.00	.14	.08	-.12
18																		1.00	.19*	-.31**
19																			1.00	-.12
20																				1.00

* - Signif. LE .05 ** - Signif. LE .01 (2-tailed)

1 = "Most women who are sexually insulted by a man provoke his behavior by the way they talk, act, or dress;" 2 = "An attractive woman has to expect sexual advances and should learn how to handle them;" 3 = "Most men are sexually teased by many of the woman with whom they interact on the job;" 4 = "A man must learn to understand that a woman's 'no' to his sexual advances really means 'no';" 5 = "It is only natural for a woman to use her sexuality as a way of getting ahead at work;" 6 = "An attractive man has to expect sexual advances and should learn how to handle them;" 7 = "I believe that sexual intimidation is a serious social problem;" 8 = "It is only natural for a man to make sexual advances to a woman he finds attractive;" 9 = "Innocent flirtations make the workday interesting;" 10 = "Encouraging a supervisor's sexual interest is frequently used by women to improve their work situation;" 11 = TSHI index score; 12 = college degree important hiring criteria; 13 = physical appearance important hiring criteria; 14 = "Citizens should fight for their country when duty calls;" 15 = "I decide who to vote for based on pocketbook issues;" 16 = "The federal government should stay out of ordinary people's lives;" 17 = "Politicians cannot be trusted;" 18 = "I have old-fashioned values about a woman's role in society;" 19 = "I support the decisions of my government, even if I disagree;" 20 = year born.

TABLE 3 Comparison of Broadcast General Managers and News Directors on TSHI

<i>Statement (overall mean)</i>		<i>Mean*</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>t value**</i>	<i>2-tail prob.</i>
Most women who are sexually insulted by a man provoke his behavior by the way they talk, act, or dress (1.92).	GMs	2.04	.84	68	1.85	.07
	NDs	1.80	.73	76		
It is only natural for a woman to use her sexuality as a way of getting ahead at work (2.07).	GMs	2.16	.94	68	1.14	.26
	NDs	1.99	.90	76		
Most men are sexually teased by many of the women with whom they interact on the job (2.08).	GMs	2.15	.85	68	.86	.39
	NDs	2.03	.83	76		
Encouraging a supervisor's sexual interest is frequently used by women to improve their work situation (2.19).	GMs	2.22	.83	68	.40	.69
	NDs	2.16	.99	75		
Innocent flirtations make the workday interesting (2.26).	GMs	2.24	.87	68	-.36	.72
	NDs	2.29	.94	76		
An attractive woman has to expect sexual advances and should learn how to handle them (2.32).	GMs	2.51	1.21	68	1.88	.06
	NDs	2.14	1.14	76		
It is only natural for a man to make sexual advances to a woman he finds attractive (2.33).	GMs	2.32	1.01	68	-.03	.98
	NDs	2.33	1.04	76		
An attractive man has to expect sexual advances and should learn how to handle them (2.56).	GMs	2.76	1.18	67	1.92	.08
	NDs	2.38	1.18	76		
I believe that sexual intimidation is a serious social problem (3.63).	GMs	3.65	.97	68	.18	.86
	NDs	3.62	.95	76		
A man must learn to understand that a woman's "no" to his sexual advances really means "no" (4.50).	GMs	4.46	.84	68	0.64	.52
	NDs	4.54	.72	76		

*The scale is: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

**t values are pooled variance estimates. In no case was the difference statistically significant at the .05 alpha level.

TABLE 4 Stepwise Regression using TSHI as Dependent Variable "Score"

<i>Independent Variables in the Equation*</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
I have old-fashioned values about a woman's role in society ($r = .41$).	2.10	.50	.32	4.21	.00
The federal government should stay out of ordinary people's lives ($r = .24$).	1.53	.55	.21	2.79	.01
Physical appearance is important when a station hires a newsroom employee ($r = .20$).	1.48	.62	.18	2.39	.02
I support the decisions of my government, even if I disagree ($r = .27$).	1.07	.46	.18	2.32	.02
(Constant)	2.53	3.42		.74	.461

Multiple R = .51

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE

	<i>DF</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>
R Square = .26	4	1268.88	317.22
Adjusted R Square = .24	90	3554.83	27.34
Standard Error = 5.23	F = 11.60		
	Significant F = .000		

* Five variables were not included in the equation that had statistically significant Pearson correlation coefficients with the TSHI score: College degree important in newsroom hires (-.18), Citizens should fight for their country when duty calls (.17), I decide who to vote for based on pocketbook issues (.20), Politicians cannot be trusted (.20), Year born (-.17).

Do you agree or disagree that the following items are important when a station hires a newsroom employee?

1. College degree
2. Physical appearance

Please respond to the following statements about our society:

3. I have old-fashioned values about a woman's role in society.
4. The federal government should stay out of ordinary people's lives.
5. I support the decisions of my government, even if I disagree.
6. Citizens should fight for their country when duty calls.
7. I decide who to vote for based on pocketbook issues.
8. Politicians cannot be trusted.
9. In what year were you born?

Four independent variables were retained in the stepwise regression model: "I have old-fashioned values about a woman's role in society;" "The federal government should stay out of ordinary people's lives;" "Physical appearance is important when a station hires a newsroom employee;" and "I support the decisions of my government, even if I disagree" (adjusted R square = .24; F = 11.60, significant at .000).

TABLE 5 Comparison of Female and Male Broadcast Managers on TSHI

<i>Statement (overall mean)</i>		<i>Mean*</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>t value**</i>	<i>2-tail prob.</i>
Most women who are sexually insulted by a man provoke his behavior by the way they talk, act, or dress (1.92).	F	1.50	.59	24	-2.91	.00
	M	2.00	.80	120		
It is only natural for a woman to use her sexuality as a way of getting ahead at work (2.07).	F	1.42	.72	24	-4.00	.00
	M	2.20	.90	120		
Most men are sexually teased by many of the women with whom they interact on the job (2.08).	F	2.00	1.02	24	-.53	.60
	M	2.10	.80	120		
Encouraging a supervisor's sexual interest is frequently used by women to improve their work situation (2.19).	F	1.71	.86	24	-2.90	.00
	M	2.29	.89	119		
Innocent flirtations make the workday interesting (2.26).	F	2.00	.89	24	-1.58	.12
	M	2.32	.90	120		
An attractive woman has to expect sexual advances and should learn how to handle them (2.32).	F	2.38	1.38	24	.24	.80
	M	2.31	1.15	120		
It is only natural for a man to make sexual advances to a woman he finds attractive (2.33).	F	1.83	.82	24	-2.64	.01
	M	2.43	1.03	120		
An attractive man has to expect sexual advances and should learn how to handle them (2.56).	F	2.21	1.22	24	-1.52	.11
	M	2.63	1.18	199		
I believe that sexual intimidation is a serious social problem (3.63).	F	4.08	.93	24	2.58	.01
	M	3.54	.94	120		
A man must learn to understand that a woman's "no" to his sexual advances really means "no" (4.50).	F	4.75	.44	24	1.74	.08
	M	4.45	.82	120		

*The scale is: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

**t values are pooled variance estimates.

Only one demographic variable, the year a respondent was born, correlated with the TSHI score ($r = -.17$) at a statistically significant level. That variable, however, failed to be retained in the stepwise regression.

A post hoc analysis of the 118 male respondents and 24 female respondents to the TSHI revealed that, in nine of ten items, the mean score for women was more in the direction of intolerance. However, the means for both men and women on the index score were intolerant of sexual harassment (female = 1.82; male = 2.22).

Five of ten index items yielded statistically significant t-tests when comparing women and men in the sample: "Most women who are sexually insulted by a man provoke his behavior by the way they talk, act, or dress;" "Encouraging a supervisor's sexual interest is frequently used by women to improve their work situation;" "I believe that sexual intimidation is a serious social problem;" "It is only natural for a man to make sexual advances to a woman he finds attractive;" and "It is only natural for a woman to use her sexuality as a way of getting ahead at work."

DISCUSSION

The combined responses of the two groups on the overall index score were clearly in the direction of intolerance for sexual harassment (mean = 2.16). While most respondents were intolerant, some of the variation in responses was accounted for by four variables: old-fashioned values about women's roles; government involvement in people's lives; physical appearance as a hiring criterion; and loyalty to government.

As few as four and as many as forty-one respondents expressed tolerant views on individual statements in the inventory. The statement to which forty-one respondents agreed or strongly agreed ("an attractive man has to expect sexual advances and should learn how to handle them") treated males, not females, as the target for harassment.

Based on this inventory, broadcast managers appeared to be personally intolerant of sexual harassment in the workplace. While they leaned toward agreement that "sexual intimidation is a serious social problem" (3.63), we do not know if they see it as a station or industry problem. It is also not clear if awareness of the problem has led to station policies against harassment. The existence of intolerant attitudes toward harassment by managers tells us nothing about the behavior of their newsroom or other station employees.

A limitation of the present study was the small number of women general manager and news director respondents ($N = 25$, 16.6 percent).

The women in this sample—mostly news directors ($N = 20$)—did not appear to differ dramatically from male respondents on their Tolerance for Sexual Harassment Inventory index. However, these results must be seen as exploratory because of the small number of women in the sample. When N is small, problems in estimating significant values for t occur. It is clear that, as more women enter the broadcast workforce, both as managers and employees, there will be a greater need to study male-female relationships.

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